

College of Education News

November 12, 2018

College of Education, Georgia Southern University

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Georgia Southern ranked in most affordable online master's in national elementary education list

November 12, 2018

Georgia Southern University was recently named to the list of [25 most affordable online options for a master's in elementary education](#) by SR Education Group. Ranked No. 19, the College of Education's [M.Ed. in Elementary Education](#) is the only higher education institution in the state of Georgia to be included in the top 25 ranking.

"We are extremely proud of our program," said Katie Brkich, Ph.D., M.Ed. Elementary Education program director. "We get amazing teachers from all over the state who want to take their teaching to the next level or become teacher leaders in their schools, and we are proud to support them through their growth."

The M.Ed. in Elementary Education is a fully online program for current teachers or educational professionals looking to advance their career. The 36-credit hour program offers coursework in instructional technology, advanced content methods, teaching diverse student populations and electives that can be used to complete endorsement programs in English as a Second Language, Online Teaching and Learning, Reading, Special Education Transition Specialist or Teacher Leadership. The curriculum is approved by the Georgia Professional Standards Commission and meets their standards for a teaching certificate upgrade.

The methodology for the ranking provided by SR Education employs median mid-career salary data, as well as manually researched tuition rates. Since salaries differ by degree level and program, SR Education Group utilizes bachelor's, master's and program-specific salary data for the rankings. Manually collected tuition rates are also specific to degree level and program. The Best Online Colleges rankings include 100 program pages and 41 by-state rankings.

For more information about the M.Ed. in Elementary Education, visit <https://coe.georgiasouthern.edu/eed/med/>.

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School psychology students claim awards at state conference

November 12, 2018



School psychology candidates pictured (l-r): Shanice Murphy, Courtney Smith and Jessica Martin

Three psychology graduate students in Georgia Southern University's College of Education (COE) claimed all student awards during the 48th annual Georgia Association of School Psychologists (GASP) fall conference, held on Jekyll Island in October.

Ed.S. School Psychology program candidates Jessica Martin, Shanice Murphy and Courtney Smith received recognition for their strong academic performances as well as dedicated service in GASP or the school psychology field.

In addition, Martin and Murphy both received the GASP's Christine Daley School Psychologist Student Scholarship. Given to students majoring in school psychology in a Georgia program, the \$1,000 scholarship is awarded to two graduate students annually. Recipients of the award were selected based on academic success in their graduate program, leadership experience, strong recommendations from professors and a desire to contribute to the school psychology field in the state of Georgia.

Martin, who earned a bachelor's in psychology from Georgia Southern, is a member of GASP as well as the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP). She is in her first semester of internship at Bulloch County Schools and is expected to

graduate in May 2019.

"I was so honored to receive this scholarship and be recognized for my achievements," Martin said. "These funds will make it possible to continue the pursuit of my educational and professional goals. I am looking forward to using the knowledge and skills I have gained in the program to serve students."

Murphy earned a bachelor's in psychology from Columbus State University prior to coming to Georgia Southern to pursue a specialist's degree in school psychology. In January, Murphy will begin her service as the University's student representative for GASP, helping to bridge the gap between students and the professional field.

"For me, winning this award means that my hard work has not been overlooked and has provided me the opportunity to continue pursuing my education without any additional stress," said Murphy. "As a recipient of this scholarship, I will be able to work in Georgia where there has been a state shortage of school psychologists and continue to serve on the board at the state and national levels."

Smith was named GASP's School Psychology Student of the Year. In her last semester of the program, Smith is expected to graduate in December after completing an internship with Bulloch County Schools.

"Winning the School Psychology Student of the Year award was a tremendous honor," Smith said. "Knowing that those in my field at the University, in our community and at the state level felt my efforts over the last three years

were outstanding was truly humbling.”

Prior to beginning the school psychology program, Smith earned a bachelor’s in early childhood education from Georgia Southern and taught kindergarten in the Savannah-Chatham County Public School System. During graduate school, she has served as a graduate assistant for the former Office of Career Services and the school psychology program. She is an active member of NASP and GASP, where she served as Georgia Southern’s Student Representative on the organization’s executive board. Smith also previously won scholarships at the state and national level.

“I hope that my receipt of the award inspired students to continue to strive for excellence, and believe in themselves as they balance many roles and tasks in their pursuit of becoming a school psychologist,” Smith added.

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Adult education alumnus receives national award

November 12, 2018



Ken Harrison

Alumnus Kenya “Ken” Harrison (Armstrong State University, 2010) was recently awarded the [Malcolm Knowles Award for Outstanding Adult Education Program Leadership](#) sponsored by the American Association for Adult and Continuing Education (AAACE).

The award recognizes teams or individuals for outstanding leadership to programs that demonstrate particular effectiveness, relevancy, creativity, immediacy, institutional cooperation or collaboration and legislative impact.

Harrison serves as the academic program manager for the Georgia Institute of Technology’s (Georgia Tech) Department of Professional

Education on the Savannah Campus. He manages the [Veterans Education Training and Transition \(VET²\) Program](#) which offers a one-of-a-kind training and employment initiative for transitioning service members, military spouses and veterans. Working with regional workforce boards around the state, the VET² program supports professional education at no cost to qualified students.

Harrison earned a [master’s in adult education](#) and community leadership from Armstrong State University in 2010, and says that his experiences have been vital to his success in running an adult education program at Georgia Tech.

“The education I received at Armstrong had a tremendous impact on my personal and professional development,” Harrison said. “I had the opportunity to not only learn in the classroom, but we also had an impact in the community through various class projects. The adult education and community leadership program really opened my eyes to the type of meaningful influence I could have in the community.”

Harrison is also a United States Marine Corps reservist with 27 years of service. He was deployed to the Middle East in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom, Kabul, Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom, worked at the Pentagon and Headquarters Marine Corps in Arlington, Virginia. He is currently a senior logistics inspector for Headquarters Marine Corps Forces Reserve in New Orleans, Louisiana.

The VET² program combines two important elements of Harrison’s life—his call to help his fellow servicemen and his desire to learn.

“It’s quite simple, I just enjoy learning,” Harrison said. “And I believe in servant leadership. This is a leadership style which is more concerned about the growth of others, their well-being, and of the communities to which they belong.”

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Georgia Southern team awarded more than \$750,000 for teacher development grant

November 12, 2018



A team of Georgia Southern University professors led by College of Education's (COE) Lacey Huffling, Ph.D., has been awarded a \$763,897 grant from the Gulf Research Program (GRP) of the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine (under award number 2000009821).

The grant will fund the first two years of Okefenokee — Understanding Real-world Relevance through Suwannee Watershed Assessment and Monitoring Project (OUR2 SWAMP). Created by Huffling and her colleagues, the project will offer a summer on-site learning experience at the Okefenokee Swamp in Georgia as well as continued professional development for both in-service and pre-service teachers.

The project aims to increase Georgia middle and high school students' understanding of the impact their local watersheds have on larger bodies of water. The project will focus on the causal relationships between the Okefenokee Swamp and the Gulf of Mexico, allowing teachers to integrate what they learn into their classrooms and promote community awareness of local waterways.

"The Okefenokee is a very unique ecosystem," said middle grades and secondary education science faculty Heather Scott, Ed.D. "It is a great place to talk about freshwater quality and how that impacts not just all the creatures and organisms that are present in the swamp, but as it drains from there the impact it has as well."

Other Georgia Southern grant team members include Checo Colon-Gaud, Ph.D., biology faculty; Shainaz Landge, Ph.D.,

chemistry faculty; and the Institute of Interdisciplinary STEM Education Coordinator Kania Greer, Ed.D., who serves as the grant evaluator.

In summer 2019, up to 20 teachers and 10 current Georgia Southern education majors will have the opportunity to visit and study the Okefenokee Swamp. The following summer, up to 30 teachers and 10 students will partake, including some participants from year one to help serve as facilitators and guides for the new participants.

"Our goal for the summer development is for the teachers to determine what they would like to study in their own schoolyards, something in their local ecosystem that they want to focus on," Huffling said. "If they are not near a stream, they may look at birds, pollinators, plants or insects. There are so many different citizen science projects they can do, and we want the teachers to help us design and develop what the week will look like. We want it to be something they need and can envision using in their classrooms."

After completing a week of hands-on activities and developing curriculum in the summer, Huffling and Scott will continue to support the educators by conducting site visits at their schools, hosting web conferencing and encouraging collaborative engagement on a blog-style website for the next year.

"A key component to this project is the follow-up," Huffling said. "It is hard to develop a project like this if they do not have some form of support. The team plans to be that support throughout the year, but the teachers will network and support each other as well."

The idea for OUR2 SWAMP grew out of a previous Teacher Quality Grant program that Scott and Missy Bennett, Ed.D., emeritus professor of science education, coordinated for several years. The project began in the Okefenokee Swamp but moved to the coast after the swamp burned in 2011. Scott and Bennett, who will serve as a consultant on the grant, saw a positive impact on teachers over several successful years of studying the swamp and coastal ecology.

"I had one teacher who told me that the experience she had that summer saved her teaching career," Scott said. "She was considering leaving. This project is a neat way to build connections with other teachers and professionals and continue to grow and rejuvenate yourself in your teaching career."

Participating teachers will receive a stipend and classroom supplies, and students will attend the weeklong development at no charge. Both the North Georgia and Okefenokee Regional Educational Service Agencies wrote letters of support for the grant

and will be loaning classroom supply kits for teachers as well.

"I love that the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine are honoring the fact that teachers deserve compensation for getting more professional development and the classroom supplies to implement it," Huffling said. "If we are going to grow teachers and advance, we need to realize that teachers are professionals and they should be compensated, and that was one of the vital components in writing this grant."

Huffling says work on the project has already begun, and they are already speaking to teachers and recruiting participants for next summer.

"We dreamed big," she said. "We have a big vision, but we have a good team to do it, and we are excited to partner with teachers to help that vision come true."

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